

We claim:

1. A data medium for transferring main data to a reproduction apparatus for reproduction by the reproduction apparatus, characterized in that:

    said data medium also transfers medium protection data which are specific to said data medium,

    the reproduction apparatus generates apparatus protection data which comprise at least first apparatus protection data and second apparatus protection data,

    wherein said first apparatus protection data are specific to a region or country in which the reproduction apparatus is to be used,

    said first apparatus protection data can not be modified by a user of the reproduction apparatus;

    said second apparatus protection data can be modified by the user to selectively define a plurality of protection levels including at least two levels which are respectively specific to adults and to children, and

    said medium protection data and apparatus protection data in combination specify a degree of restriction on said reproduction of the main data by the reproduction apparatus,

    wherein the combination of said medium protection data and said first apparatus protection data specifies that said main data are reproduced either in their entirety or not at all, and the combination of said medium protection data and said second apparatus protection data specifies that said main data are reproduced in their entirety, partially, or not at all,

    wherein, for each combination of protection levels based on said medium protection data and said apparatus protection data, there is a corresponding range of one or more possible

values of final protection level, said corresponding range extending from a least severe value to the most severe value,

wherein said data medium conveys both said medium protection data and said main data in an identical form.

2. A reproduction protection method for operating on main data which are conveyed by a data medium, the method comprising the steps of:

detecting medium protection data which are specific to each of predetermined data pieces within said main data and are also conveyed by said data medium;

detecting protection position information which specifies a position of said predetermined data pieces within said main data at which to apply said reproduction protection, said protection position information also being conveyed by the data medium;

generating apparatus protection data which comprise at least first apparatus protection data and second apparatus protection data,

wherein said first apparatus protection data are specific to a region or a country in which said main data are to be reproduced, and can not be modified by a recipient of said reproduced main data, and wherein said second apparatus protection data can be modified by the recipient to selectively define a plurality of protection levels including at least two levels which are respectively specific to adults and to children;

defining a protection level based .on said medium protection data and said apparatus protection data in combination; and

executing reproduction of said main data in accordance with said protection level,

wherein the combination of said medium protection data and said first apparatus protection data determines whether said main data are reproduced in their entirety or not at all, and the combination of said medium protection data and said second apparatus protection data determines whether said main data are reproduced in their entirety, partially, or not at all,

wherein, for each combination of protection levels based on said medium protection data and said apparatus protection data, there is a corresponding range of one or more possible values of final protection level, said corresponding range extending from a least severe value to a most severe value, and

wherein said data medium conveys both said medium protection data and said main data in an identical form.

3. A reproduction protection method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of executing reproduction of said main data comprises:

reproducing said main data either in their entirety or not at all, in accordance with said combination of said medium protection data and said first apparatus protection data, and

reproducing said main data in their entirety, partially, or not at all, in accordance with said combination of said medium protection data and said second apparatus protection data.

4. A reproduction protection method in accordance with claim 3, wherein said step of executing reproduction of said main data further comprises executing reproduction of said main data in accordance with a value of final protection level between the least severe value and the most severe value in accordance with said combination of protection levels.

5. A reproduction protection method in accordance with claim 2, wherein said step of executing reproduction of said main data further comprises executing reproduction of said main data in accordance with a value of final protection level between the least severe value and the most severe value in accordance with said combination of protection levels.